

Let's Talk

"Man o' the People" with m'kins

that matter to you & me.

"ABOUT gets things done!" This has proved a vote-winning slogan in the municipal elections, and the continued Leftward swing of public opinion marks a general impatience for bold and resolute leadership. The Government would do well to remember, however, that the claim to be made good. And the election campaign is over, those who forget that it is possible to act in haste and repent at leisure. This cautionary note is not sounded in criticism of the forthright and to the point in civil aviation and wireless and cable communications. On the other hand, these same instruments of progress have been debated in Parliament. What is running in my mind today is the actual slogan I have quoted: "Labour gets things done!" For this is a time when the same time a statement of fact and a perversion of truth. And our present Government is no more exclusively representative of "labour," with a small "n" than the Coalition was exclusively representative of the "Nation," with a capital "N."

WITH few exceptions, our whole adult population is made up of working men and women. And no way of thinking can be more damaging to the community than that of the "middle class" which is based on the ancient fallacy that one kind of work is intrinsically superior or inferior to another. The dock strike, coming to an end tomorrow with a thirty-day "truce," has supplied a calamitous illustration of how many nationally important things can get done when labour ceases in a single occupation. But the community is no less dependent upon clerks than manual workers. The pen is no less mighty than the pick. And, for that matter, if any considerable body of employers and executives could be "striking" in the sense of the "working men" would find themselves out of a job in next to no time. The moral of all this, as I see it, is that we need to use the power of our own power harmoniously and put an end to civil war between one kind of labour and another.

HOW is this to be done? The leaders of the official dock strike claim that the stoppage has "served its purpose."

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DEANNA DURBIN new film, works too, and perhaps, "Alone with the Gods," is full of mystery, mystery, mystery. You can't find a favourite scene among so much of it. You can't find a scene you love, why, why it is so lovely! Like a lot of 10 other film stars, she uses the camera to show her complete command of her wonderful, smooth, soft, and shiny hair.

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directing public attention to the men's grievances. This seems to me a rather novel idea. The general public, however, have had no voice in the dispute and it is impossible for them to be the poorer for irreversibly lost lives.

Some valuable cargoes have been lost. The distribution of urgently needed goods has been deranged. And, though Miss Ellen Wilkinson was rash and wrong to suggest that a continuance of the strike might compel the Government to ration bread, nobody can deny that wide-spread stoppage of essential work could speedily reduce the community's standard of living.

"Little Ellen" has since made a frank apology in the House of Commons for "speaking out of turn."

But I cannot forbear to remind the Minister of Education and all her colleagues in the Cabinet that we are all getting heartily sick of gloomy warnings about coming misfortune.

As a matter of fact, it is my main argument, namely, that strikes, like wars, are things to be avoided at all cost.

ACTUALLY, there has been no period in our history when the balance of power was more favourable to peaceable and reasonable settlement of trade disputes than at the present.

The great trade unions have never been better organised, the employers' associations never more ready to "talk things over," and the Government never more anxious to conciliate both sides, or arbitrate between them.

In fact, the machinery of conciliation is in good order and could work smoothly if it were only lubricated with patience and common sense.

That is why the majority of the population was "allotted" the Government in its refusal to have any dealings with unofficial "wildcat" strikes.

That is why the dock strike has been limited to a few days and also why no time should now be wasted in reaching an honest agreement acceptable to both sides.

But, if we are breaking with tradition today, for Mr. Attlee has informed the House of Commons that no money grants will be paid to the leaders of our armed forces in World War Number...

"His Majesty's Government," he said, "has reached the conclusion that it would not be in accord with the spirit of the times to make such a grant."

It is a pity that the Government, which has called for sacrifice on the part of the whole community, Services and civilians alike, to single out the leaders of our armed forces for special recognition by way of monetary grants.

The words I have put into italics merit special consideration. For I repeat emphatically that it is no longer in accord with the spirit of the times to...

THAT the dockers "deserve" increased pay, greater security and better conditions, various respectable people would care to deny. It is impossible, however, for the Government and the public to realise that the recurring demands for more pay and shorter hours...

President Truman said the other day he believed American industry could afford to pay higher wages without detriment to the community as a whole. But that only means in effect that the United States is now in a position to improve upon its already high standard of living.

Whenever this country gets into an equally favourable position, "Man o' the People" will be the first to support a demand for a general rise in wages.

At the present time, however, a rise all round would leave us no better off. For goods would remain in short supply and the price of them would rise until it had absorbed all and perhaps more than all the extra money in the pocket.

And so it seems to me that the real way out of today's predicament is not one of bigger pay but of more equal rewards for all.

It is the only way of establishing unequal man-power loads.

What, after all, is any man or woman worth in terms of money pay? It is the value of the services he or she performs, or the value of the goods he or she produces, or the value of the work he or she does.

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single out any class of service for exceptional and extravagant reward.

MANY readers are bound to ask the question just as Mr. Churchill disapproves with Mr. Attlee. But not the world, if an appeal were launched by a national newspaper for cash tribute to say, Field-Marshal Montgomery, the money would go, in like an avalanche.

My contention remains that the spirit of the times is against particularised rewards. It does not believe and never will be that all services to the community are of equal value or that they should be equally recompensed.

But I hope and trust that this Labour Government will express the public's deep gratitude to our conspicuous victory winners by securing their pensions, or their pay, or both, not by conferring unearned wealth upon their sons and their sons' sons from this day forth even for ever.

All this fits into my general argument that the Government should formulate a new wages policy and that the study of labour and its rewards from a new angle.

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